

## **Klobuchar, Franken Urge Secretaries of Defense and Army to Ensure All Minnesota Veterans Receive Full Military Honors at Funerals**

October 9, 2014

*Recent changes to the Military Funeral Honors program have raised concerns that some veterans in Minnesota may be laid to rest without receiving the full honors they deserve*

*Senators called on the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Army to restore funding for this program so that the Minnesota National Guard can continue to provide full military honors at funerals*

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken today urged the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army to ensure that all Minnesota veterans receive full military honors at funerals. Recent changes to the Military Funeral Honors program have raised concerns that some veterans in Minnesota may be laid to rest without receiving the full honors they deserve. In a letter, the senators called on the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army to restore funding for this program so that the Minnesota National Guard can continue to provide full military honors at funerals.

**“We have heard from constituents who are very concerned that, because of a reduction in funding for the Military Funeral Honors (MFH) program, there will not be Honor Guards at all the funerals of Minnesota veterans in 2015,” the senators wrote. “We believe this is unacceptable, and we urge you to restore funding for this very important function. We stand ready to work with both of you now so that all Minnesota veterans may receive this important tribute and expression of gratitude.”**

Two years ago, Klobuchar, Franken and the rest of Minnesota’s congressional delegation successfully addressed a similar shortfall in the Military Funeral Honors program.

The full text of the senators’ letter is below:

*Dear Secretary Hagel and Secretary McHugh:*

*We are writing to urge you to help resolve a serious problem Minnesota veterans and their families are facing. We have heard from constituents who are very concerned that, because of a reduction in funding for the Military Funeral Honors (MFH) program, there will not be Honor Guards at all the funerals of Minnesota veterans in 2015. We urge you to restore this funding so that the Minnesota National Guard can continue to provide full military honors at funerals.*

*The Military Funeral Honors program helps to make sure that very important traditions are continued at military funerals, such as the playing of Taps and the folding of the American flag. In Minnesota, these solemn responsibilities are carried out by members of the Minnesota National Guard. In FY 2014, the MFH program conducted nearly 5,000 funerals across the state of Minnesota. Our understanding is that as a result of a significant reduction in funding allocated to the Minnesota National Guard for FY15, the MFH program will be limited to supporting 3,000 funerals, with priority going to service at the State Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley, Fort Snelling, and the new Veterans Cemetery. This will potentially deprive the funerals of veterans in other parts of the state of this very important service and tradition.*

*We believe this is unacceptable, and we urge you to restore funding for this very important function. Two years ago, we were pleased to work with Secretary McHugh to help address a similar shortfall in the MFH that threatened to affect Minnesota's veterans and their families. At the time, Secretary McHugh expressed the Department of the Army's commitment to providing professional military funeral honors, in accordance with service tradition, to every eligible veteran when they are requested by the veteran's family. And we stand ready to work with both of you now so that all Minnesota veterans may receive this important tribute and expression of gratitude.*

*Thank you for your prompt attention to this very important matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us, or Travis Talvitie on Sen. Klobuchar's staff at (202) 224-3244 or Jeff Lomonaco on Sen. Franken's staff at (202) 224-5641.*

*Sincerely,*

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